

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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P R 171110Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4814

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 4872

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, LA, TH

SUBJ: THAI DAM REFUGEES

REF: A. STATE 164598

B. UDORN 414

1. WE CONCUR WITH RECOMMENDATION MADE REF B THAT THAI-DAM (BLACK THAI) REFUGEES WHO WERE FORMERLY EMPLOYEES OF THIS MISSION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS VIETNAMESE FOR PURPOSES OF THE US REFUGEE PROGRAM. WE DO NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT REFUGEE FLOW SHOULD BE OPENED TO THAI DAM IN GENERAL.

2. GENERALLY, THE THAI DAM WHO WORKED FOR USG WERE AFFILIATED WITH THE FRENCH MILITARY OR CIVIL SERVICE PRIOR TO FALL OF DIEN BIEN PHU? THEY WERE FORCED TO FLEE TO LAOS FROM NORTH VIETNAM IN THE MID-50'S. MOST OF THESE PERSONS CONTINUED ACTIVELY TO OPPOSE THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND PATHET LAO, AND MANY WERE EMPLOYED BY AMERICAN MILITARY OR CIVILIAN AGENCIES DURING NEARLY TWO DECADES.

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3. IN LAOS THE THAI DAM WERE CONSIDERED REFUGEES BY

THE LAO GOVERNMENT, ONLY A VERY FEW OF THEIR NUMBER HAVE BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN LAO NATIONALITY. THE REMAINDER HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO OBTAIN ANY SORT OF RECOGNIZABLE TRAVEL DOCUMENT. WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER DRV OR ANY OTHER VIETNAMESE AUTHORITY (REF A, PARA 4) CONSIDERED THAI DAM TO BE "VIETNAMESE" OR HILL-TRIBESMEN, OR BASICALLY STATELESS.

4. THE THAI DAM NOW IN THE NONG KHAI AREA THINK -- WITH SOME REASON -- THAT THEIR LIVES AND LIVELIHOOD ARE DIRECTLY THREATENED BY THE PATHET LAO TAKEOVER IN LAOS. WE BELIEVE WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO CERTIFY THOSE THAI DAM WHO WORKED FOR THE US MISSION AND WHOSE IDENTIFICATION WITH USG HAS PLACED THEM IN A "HIGH-RISK" CATEGORY. HOWEVER, CERTIFICATION FOR ALL THAI DAM, JUST BECAUSE THEY CAME FROM VIETNAM, WOULD BE UNJUSTIFIABLE ON SEVERAL COUNTS. PROBLEMS OF ADJUSTMENT FOR THESE HILL-TRIBE PEOPLE WOULD BE PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT IN THE US. ASSUMING THAT THAILAND WILL ACCEPT THEM, MOST OF THEM WOULD BE MUCH BETTER OFF CULTURALLY AND ECONOMICALLY IN NORTHERN AND NE THAILAND.

5. WE HAVE CLEAR INDICATION FROM THAI DAM LEADERSHIP THAT SOME 130 FAMILY HEADS (WITH 550 INDIVIDUALS IN TOTAL) HAVE EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO SEEK REFUGE IN US. THERE ARE ALSO A HANDFUL OF THAI DAM STILL WORKING FOR EMBASSY WHO COULD ALSO FALL INTO THIS CATEGORY AT A LATER DATE. IN SUM, IF LIMITED PAROLE AUTHORITY IS GRANTED FOR THAI DAM AS A DISTINCT CATEGORY, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE TOTAL NUMBER INVOLVED FROM LAOS WOULD EXCEED 750.

6. WE THEREFORE REQUEST PERMISSION TO PROCESS AND CERTIFY FOR PAROLE THAI DAM EMPLOYEES OF US MISSION TO LAOS WHO WERE BORN IN VIETNAM UNDER GUIDELINES PROVIDED REFTEL B. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD MAKE SPECIFIC EFFORT TO ASSURE THAT RELIEF FUNDS CHANNELED INTO SUCH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AS UNHCR AND ICRC REACH THE THAI DAM WHO ELECT TO STAY IN THAILAND.

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